

# A Few Notable Diptera from Windsor Forest

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The following brief notes deal with the more interesting or uncommon flies met with (for the most part) whilst working for beetles in this famous old hunting-ground. The paucity of species recorded, and especially of the families represented, calls for some excuse. My collecting of Diptera in the locality was practically limited, with few exceptions, to the one

season of 1940; and, in that, to odd week-ends from May to July; moreover few flies but Syrphids were then noted. Since again beginning in latter years to take notice of some sections of the Order, and casting my net now more widely, I have unfortunately from one cause or another been unable to manage more than a few visits—and those not at the best times of year in an entomologically far less favourable period. Hence the somewhat meagre list (to which I hope to add in future years).

Like Donisthorpe in his study of the Coleoptera of the area (1939) I make no general distinction between Windsor Forest and the Great Park, which adjoin and are essentially and faunistically of the same character; but, unlike him, I do not include under the former designation the sandy heath and pine-wood area around Ascot, which has a markedly different fauna and has for long been quite separate from Windsor Forest proper. None of the flies here listed are from this Bagshot Sand country. Though the Virginia Water portion of Windsor Great Park is in Surrey, again none of the species were taken there, so that all the records appertain to Berkshire.

#### STRATIOMYIDAE

*Solva maculata* Mg.—A female of this rare and extremely local insect, recorded hitherto, it would seem, only from the New Forest and Epping Forest, was bred from a puparium found in the wet rotten wood of an old beech stump in May 1940, emerging towards the end of the month\*.

\*Since this was written, a record has appeared of a specimen taken on a window at Silwood Park, near Ascot, 18.vii.57, and a larva in rotten wood at Virginia Water, Surrey (about a mile away), iii.33 (Southwood, 1964). Mine, however, appears to have been the first find in Berkshire.

#### THEREVIDAE

*Psilocephala melaleuca* Lw.—In terms of specimens in collections this handsome species must probably be classed among our rarest Diptera; the only ones I know are of a ♂ bred from a larva by Donisthorpe in May 1930—now in the British Museum collection—and a ♀ bred from a pupa by myself in June 1940, now in Mr. J. E. Collin's collection. (See Collin, 1948: 96). The puparium of the latter was found in wood-mould in a hollow beech trunk which yielded also larvae of *Pocota* (see below). I believe I once saw an adult settled for a moment on this same tree, in July, but could not secure it. Therevid larvae presumably of this species—only one having been reared—are, however, not very seldom met with in old rotten stumps or trunks of oak, beech, ash, etc, in the area; but owing to the uncertain nature of their food, perhaps, it seems difficult to bring them to maturity if not already full-grown. Small earthworms were not taken by a half-grown larva I tried to rear, but it is possible that its vigour had been impaired by some degree of previous starvation.

#### EMPIDIDAE

*Heleodromia immaculata* Hal.—One or two males swept in company with the next species (5.x.62), kindly determined by Mr. E. A. Fonseca. Apparently a new record for Berkshire, this not being among the counties listed by Collin (1961: 687), who notes it is 'by no means common', and whose latest date (8.ix) is practically a month earlier.

*Rhamphomyia erythrophthalma* Mg.—This autumnal species was not uncommon on 5th October, 1962, by sweeping the lowest foliage of oaks, and the bracken etc., beneath them, in one area of the Park; also in another

part at the end of September, 1964, in plenty on flowering ivy, but seeming very local. Possibly also a new county record to judge from Collin (p. 438), but I believe it can be found almost anywhere if looked for at the right time.

### SYRPHIDAE

*Chrysogaster chalybeata* Mg.—On umbels at Highstanding Hill, at the side of the Winkfield road skirting the forest, where a narrow ditch ran, with a few *C. solstitialis* Fln. vii. 40 (and 41?). I have only one specimen, but others may have been present at the time.

... *Cheilosia fraterna* Mg. and *C. bergenstammi* Beck.—Single specimens along the forest verge by the Ascot road just outside the park, visiting hogweed umbels, late June 1940. No doubt neither species is rare, but they are far from common compared with many others of the genus, and I have not seen either since.

*Syrphus diaphanus* Zett.—A female of this rare species at the same place as the *Chrysogasters*, at rest on an umbel of *Heracleum* or *Angelica* in dull weather, mid-July 1941.

*Xanthandrus comtus* Harr.—A male with wings badly damaged, also at these flowers, vii.40. Another species which is anything but common, though supposed to be generally distributed (which I doubt).

*Brachyopa insensilis* Coll.—Two examples netted about a sapping elm, i.vi.63. In Berks., it is already on record from Bagley Wood, and perhaps elsewhere.

*Brachypalpus bimaculatus* Macq.—On tree trunks, scarce; only one caught, a ♀, which settled rather high up on a beech, late May 1940; another seen, but missed, on a beech trunk in a different part of the area, in July of that year. Its resemblance to a honey-bee is striking.

*Myiolepta luteola* Gmel.—At bramble blossoms, very local; singly in June 1939 and 40 in one spot at the edge of the forest, at Highstanding Hill—*Pipiza austriaca* Mg. accompanying it (also singly) on each occasion. Berkshire is not among the counties listed for *M. luteola* by Coe (1953:47).

*Xylota lenta* Mg.—Local and not common in openly wooded places, June; probably far more widespread in the area than yet found. I have seen this fine fly in Epping Forest also.

*Xylota xanthocnema* Coll.—Two males of this comparatively new species were taken alighting on one of the forest paths in sunshine, June 1940. Not, I believe, previously recorded at Windsor, but originally described from Berks. (Bagley Wood) and since found in about six other counties (Coe, p. 79).

*Xylota nemorum* F.—One example on an oak stump in fairly shady forest, end of June 1940. (Perhaps less uncommon than formerly, as I have met with it in some numbers about a very old rotten beech at Knole Park, Sevenoaks, Kent, besides singly at Ham Street in the same county—on a buttercup—and at Esher, Surrey, swept near the Black Pond.)

*Xylota florum* F.—Two specimens (one a very small ♀ more like *X. abiens*, but kindly confirmed as *florum* by Mr. Coe) taken on the same occasion as the last species, flying round and basking on old logs and stumps; I have not come across it elsewhere. Thus all the British species of the genus except *tarda* Mg. and *abiens* Mg. have been noted in the locality—*sylvarum* L. and *segnis* L. being common, especially the latter.

*Eumerus ornatus* Mg.—A male caught settling on the ground in open forest with much bracken, in strong sun, vi.40. Otherwise I have not come

across the species, and do not think it can be generally common.

*Helophilus hybridus* Lw.—I have noted this as having occurred about one of the ponds in the park, viii. 39; the specimen has not survived, but should have been correctly recognised.

*Calliprobola speciosa* Rossi.—This fine Syrphid, taken in very few localities, is well known from the area and has already been mentioned in these pages by Mr. L. Parmenter (1960). It was not very uncommon in late May and early June, 1940, on hawthorn bloom here and there in the park and forest, but caught specimens often had the wings frayed. Later in June and during July, when the hawthorn blossom was over, it could sometimes be seen hovering high up in sunlit forest glades and once or twice settled (for a brief moment) on old oak or beech trunks—in which, most likely, its early stages are passed.

*Pocota personata* Harr. (= *apiformis* Schk.).—Another handsome rarity already recorded from the Forest, but very seldom seen at large; its remarkably close resemblance to a bumble-bee may contribute something to this, but its secretive habits and generally elevated habitat probably have more to do with it. (See Hobby, 1940; Allen, 1964, *in press*). I bred a few flies late in March, 1940, from larvae found the previous June deep down in very rotten wet wood-mould in a hollow beech, as recorded in Dr. Hobby's paper on the species cited above; a year later the larvae in this tree were almost wholly replaced by those of the common *Myiatropa florea* L. in plenty. *P. personata* was first recorded from the area by Donisthorpe, who bred out a number, but the first imago encountered there seems to have been a female captured by me on a beech trunk, 1.vii.41. The flies bred the year before were of the yellow-banded form, whereas the others were tawny-banded.

*Criorrhina ranunculi* Panz.—Also a large and impressive bee-like species, uncommon but widespread, of which the sole example I have yet come across was a female caught in the act of 'prospecting' the various holes and cavities around the roots of a large old stump of beech on the date last mentioned under *Pocota*—a late one for both insects—doubtless with a view to oviposition. I have often seen its commoner congener *C. berberina* similarly engaged, so cannot entirely agree that these are habitual high fliers rarely coming within reach of an ordinary net except sometimes when attracted to flowering shrubs (see, for instance, Colyer & Hammond, 1961: 170). *C. ranunculi* should also be obtainable from hawthorn blossom in the area, on which *C. berberina* F. (both forms) and *C. floccosa* Mg. are not infrequent in some years. *C. asilica* Fln. I have not seen, but it probably occurs.

*Volucella inflata* F.—One, which eluded capture, settling on a small *Cossus*-infected oak, August 1939. I have met with it, also singly, in exactly similar conditions in two other places—and only thus (Allen, 1961). To me therefore it is easily our rarest species of the genus, though Mr. Parmenter assures me that it is not uncommon in certain districts, where its habits seem to agree with those of the other *Volucellae*.

#### DROSOPHILIDAE

*Drosophila picta* Staeg. (= *macularis* Villen).—A specimen of this small but neatly-marked fly was obtained by sweeping not far from a marshy pond in the park, 5.x.62, for the name of which I have to thank Mr. Fonseca.

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